

COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA
Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
February 6, 2003

Attendees:

Ken Currey	Russ Walker	Terry Gray	Jane Ross
John Foster	Gene Arnesen	Shane Henry	George Rossman
Doralyn Genova	B. Boeschenstein	Wade Johnson	Lovell Sasser
Warren Gore	Nadja Brozina	Scott Larson	Bob Sherrill
Greg Gnesios	Arleta Carr	Mel Lloyd	Cindy Sherrill
Doug Hall	Jim Cooper	Mike Perry	Harold Snyder
Joe Keys	Shaun Deeney	John Potter	Derek Wagner
Dan Rosenthal	Jim Dollerschell	Eric Rechel	Palma Wilson
Bob Silbernagel	Josh Edgington	Lynae Rogers	Steve Yamashita

Greetings and Introductions

Chairman Warren Gore called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m., and a round of introductions followed. This evening's agenda includes:

- Update by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) staff
- Recommendations for Wilderness, River Corridor, and Rabbit Valley Zones
- Update on Resource Management Plan (RMP) progress: Management Situation Analysis (MSA) and Alternatives

BLM Update

Greg Gnesios, Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA) Manager, noted that today marks the first anniversary since the kick-off of the CCNCA RMP process and expressed his appreciation for everyone's efforts. The next few months will be critical to BLM in meeting its timelines. The NCA staff is now looking at management alternatives that will set this special area apart from other BLM lands—it is the CCNCA with an emphasis on conservation of the area.

Jane Ross, CCNCA Planning Team Leader, discussed the draft MSA, handed out this evening to the Advisory Council, and explained that the document will become Chapter 3 of the RMP. The MSA, a document compiled for internal use only, is a snapshot in time of all of the CCNCA's resources. Jane asked the Advisory Council to review the information carefully and forward any comments or concerns to her. The BLM Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) is now developing alternatives for their individual areas of

expertise. The four levels of alternatives are being developed and, ultimately, the preferred alternative will be chosen from a wide range of reasonable alternatives. The four levels of alternative themes are:

1. Continuation of current management or the no-action alternative. The analysis of this alternative is required by law. Under this alternative the Grand Junction Resource Management Plan, the Ruby Canyon/Black Ridge Integrated Resource Management Plan, and Bureau-level policy and guidance would remain in effect.
2. Emphasis on recreational use.
3. Modified recreational alternative offering a blended emphasis between recreation and conservation.
4. Emphasis on conservation possibly through closing roads and trails, offering no additional facilities, and increasing restoration and rehabilitation efforts.

Jane added that the draft document of the RMP is not anticipated to be much larger than the existing draft MSA. More detailed alternatives will be presented at the March meeting.

Working Group Recommendations

Wilderness Working Group:

Warren opened discussions on the Wilderness Working Group recommendations. Group Leader Bill Schapley presented these recommendations last month, but the Advisory Council did not act on the package to allow themselves ample time for reviewing the information.

Joe Keys addressed group size limitations and felt that the desire of the Wilderness Working group is to avoid any restrictions for the present. The recommendations will be revised to reflect that the BLM recommend group sizes of 12 or less individuals within the Wilderness and 25 or less individuals in the canyons' lower portions. Russ Walker, the River Corridor Working Group Leader, agreed that this group's recommendations should be revised to reflect the same numbers as the Wilderness recommendations on group sizes.

Bob Silbernagel expressed concerns with the Pollock Canyon Estates recommendations. His two issues are the parking lot closure and no Wilderness-departure trailheads. Greg indicated that he learned of no new trails being planned in the area of the Front Country Wilderness, after a meeting this week with Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) staff.

Shaun Deeney, from CDOW, confirmed that no management changes are planned for the Horsethief Canyon State Wildlife Area (HCSWA) and reminded the group that the BLM does not have management authority in HCSWA. Shaun noted that issues voiced by the Pollock Canyon Estates representatives should be worked out among homeowners, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and CDOW.

Bob Sherrill spoke to these comments and explained that he joined the Wilderness Working Group because of concerns that CCNCA planning could impact the CDOW and BOR management of their area. Bob asked about the purpose of an 18-slot parking lot situated near both the HCSWA and CCNCA.

Shaun stated that CDOW's purpose for the parking lot does not include allowing access to the Wilderness, and the parking lot will not be closed.

The Advisory Council agreed that it does not have the authority to manage any issues existing between CDOW/BOR and Pollock Canyon Estates—these issues need to be worked out among those parties. However, the Advisory Council can recommend that CCNCA boundaries be properly marked.

Bob Silbernagel motioned to accept the Pollock Canyon Estates Wilderness recommendations, with two amendments. The recommendation for closing the HCSWA parking lot after hunting season ends should be struck and any stipulations regarding over-flights should allow low-level wildlife management flights, as well as helicopter lift-out flights for cultural purposes. This motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

The Advisory Council wanted to clarify that campsites along BS Road, including historic campsites off the access roads, should be designated. This also was motioned, seconded, and passed.

Terry Gray asked about the provision for horse trailer parking by the alcove. It was noted in previous meeting minutes that Road C allows for this type of parking.

Ken Currey expressed concerns with whether the Front Country Wilderness was adequately addressed in the Working Group's recommendations. Greg agreed, suggesting a subgroup be formed to address this area prior to the RMP's development. Jane will contact Bill Schapley, Wilderness Working Group lead, to see if he is interested in participating in this subgroup.

Joe Keys voiced concerns with human waste issues surrounding designated campsites and proposed a motion for requiring all those car camping, south of the river, to carry out human waste in the Wilderness (if not the entire CCNCA). Portable toilets should be required for every overnight camper in dispersed, designated sites along the access roads. This would not apply to Wilderness backpackers and hunters. This motion supports the "leave no trace" principle and was seconded and passed unanimously.

Someone commented that wood cutting is not currently allowed in the Wilderness.

An inquiry was made regarding changes to the Wilderness boundary, and BLM reported that the status is uncertain but being explored. A motion was made to pass the entire recommendation package with noted revisions. This motion was seconded and passed.

River Corridor Working Group:

Russ stated that the Working Group's goals are to ensure minimal impact to the resource and maintain its primitive appeal.

Russ covered the recommendations, which are attached to these minutes.

Scott Larson emphasized that the Working Group felt that fire pan or propane heater requirements would apply to onshore visitors in vehicles only, not to hikers.

Joe stated that all visitors to the River Corridor should be required to carry a portable toilet system, whether that system is a small plastic container or more sophisticated "groover." All members agreed that a portable toilet system should definitely be *required* for overnight campers but only *recommended* for day-use visitors.

A motion was made to accept the River Corridor Working Group recommendations, with the amendment to Recommendation No. 9 regarding group sizes. As discussed above, those numbers should be consistent with the Wilderness Working Group recommendations on group sizes. This motion was seconded and passed.

There was a 10-minute break.

Rabbit Valley Working Group:

John Potter, group leader, pointed out that traditional uses in Rabbit Valley include both mechanized and motorized uses. This Working Group's recommendations would promote these activities.

Jim Cooper, BLM Transportation Planner, noted that purple and green trails reflected on the BLM map (attached) do not exist and are proposed only. Some would be single track, and some would be wider for all-terrain vehicles (ATV).

The recommendations were presented by John and are attached to these minutes.

Bob Silbernagel noted that Recommendation No. 18, which encourages developing a river access, conflicts with the River Corridor Working Group recommendations for no new river access points. It was noted that the recommended motorized access to the river stops short of the river by at least a quarter of a mile, requiring foot access after that.

Greg pointed out that, by providing both Proposal A and Proposal B trail systems (reflected on the BLM map), the emphasis is made on conservation as well as recreation. Warren expressed concerns with what appears to be several new trails, but Ken explained that the proposals reflected are deceiving. Many other trails are being closed and relocated to smarter areas. The intent is to lessen the impact by developing smarter trails, not more trails.

Lynae Rogers, BLM Rangeland Management Specialist, addressed the issues with land health in Rabbit Valley. Lynae reported that the area north of I-70 is not meeting land health standards, while land south of I-70 is meeting those standards. Grazing rotations and rehabilitation efforts with shrub plantings are being initiated by BLM.

Dan Rosenthal had concerns with the proposed designation for hiking and horseback riding, of a trail near the Utah border south of I-70, which appears to limit mountain biking opportunities. Others attending assured him that options do exist for bicycle riding into the Rabbit Valley area from Utah Rims. The trail in question is currently undesignated, but it appears that mountain bikes do not currently use it anyway.

Eric Rechel asked about the roads in the vicinity of the cultural area, and Jim indicated that he recommends closing these roads to help protect the site. Eric also expressed his concern with all of the loops that are being proposed and the potential for further resource abuse. Jim assured Eric that the rocky environment, where these loops would be located, could withstand increased impact.

Greg voiced a concern with short-cutting, which he felt would be encouraged by the new loops, and questioned whether it was possible to minimize the number of proposed loops. Jim agreed that this could be addressed, probably through the alternative development.

Jane added that an additional recommendation, previously agreed upon by the Working Group, is that when trails are rerouted, no trails will be closed until the new trails are opened. For the record, the Working Group does recognize that the Kokopelli Trail runs through Rabbit Valley and respects that trail's designation. It was asked that the maintenance of the Kokopelli Trail be addressed in the RMP.

John Foster requested that another location be found for target shooting, as he felt it is too close to the Mygatt-Moore Quarry and the Trail Through Time. Discussions ensued on where the better location would be, and all agreed to explore other locations north of I-70.

There was a motion to accept the Rabbit Valley Working Group's recommendations with the following amendments:

- Recognize the Kokopelli Trail system.
- Keep old trails open until new trails are completed.
- Explore areas, other than the box canyon near the Trail Through Time, for target shooting north of I-70.
- Requirements for fire pans, or portable heaters, and portable toilets should be consistent with other Working Group recommendations.

The motion was seconded and passed.

City of Fruita

Warren gave the floor to Bennett Boeschenstein, community development director for the city of Fruita. Bennett relayed that Fruita is proud to be the Gateway City to the CCNCA and supports the BLM's planning efforts. As the Gateway City, discussions are being held with the Dinosaur Museum and other agencies regarding establishing an interagency visitor center in Fruita, similar to that found in Moab, Utah. Another priority for Fruita is the acquisition of Snooks Bottom, a priority for the Riverfront Commission as well. An offer was previously made to the current landowner, but no response has been received. Bennett urged the Advisory Council to incorporate the acquisition of Snook's Bottom into their recommendations to the BLM. The city has Great Outdoors Colorado Legacy funding available to contribute to the purchase of Snooks Bottom. The State Land Trust has also been contacted.

Greg added that in-holdings, as well as other private lands on the outer edges of the CCNCA, are BLM priorities. Prioritizing these acquisitions will be critical to the CCNCA's future.

Colorado National Monument Superintendent Palma Wilson announced that their general management plan's preferred alternative should be chosen by the end of February. Monument planning staff and CCNCA staff are working closely together in developing their respective management plans.

Shane Henry, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Assistant Director, spoke briefly and expressed his appreciation for the recommendations presented by the Working Groups. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was executed last year between the DNR and BLM. Shane feels this relationship is critical to the RMP's success, and the DNR looks forward to working with all of the parties involved during the planning process.

Warren asked Jane to clarify the role of the Advisory Council in the weeks to come. Jane reported that alternatives must be developed and completed by month's end, with a preferred alternative chosen at the March 6 meeting. The BLM is currently working on completing the alternatives matrix and will forward this to the Advisory Council within the next few weeks.

Warren felt that the Advisory Council would need to meet, in an unofficial capacity, to discuss the matrix, do its homework, and then be prepared to recommend the preferred alternative during the March meeting.

Greg added that the new BLM State Director, Ron Wenker, is planning to attend that meeting as well.

Warren indicated that he would give the group a few days to review the material and then organize a meeting for no later than February 26.

Jane reminded the group that alternatives developed by the BLM must be both feasible and reasonable and will be based on working group input, Advisory Council recommendations, and internal BLM discussions. The Advisory Council should know that recommendations presented at the last two meetings would not be incorporated into the alternatives matrix as a whole. Many alternatives may be “common to all” recommendations. Various processes in choosing the best mix of alternatives, in ultimately arriving at the preferred alternative, were discussed.

The Advisory Council set a tentative meeting for February 26, at 6:00 p.m., for their meeting and BLM staff will not attend.

Comments/Corrections to January 9, 2003, Meeting Minutes

Warren noted a correction to the wording addressing grazing objectives. The sentence, contained in the third paragraph located above the Wilderness Working Group Recommendations sub-heading, should instead reflect “the BLM and the permittee will work together to manage grazing for sustainability and conservation in accordance with *the standards and guidelines for rangeland health*.”

Lovell Sasser noted the trail mentioned in these minutes, by the Mack Ridge Working Group, as being a responsibility of the Rabbit Valley Working Group. It was also stated that this trail should be designated as multiple use, but Lovell said there is no access for horses from the Mack Ridge side, and the trail is both difficult and dangerous for other users as well because of the railroad.

Tentative March Agenda

- Begin discussions on alternatives

Public Comment

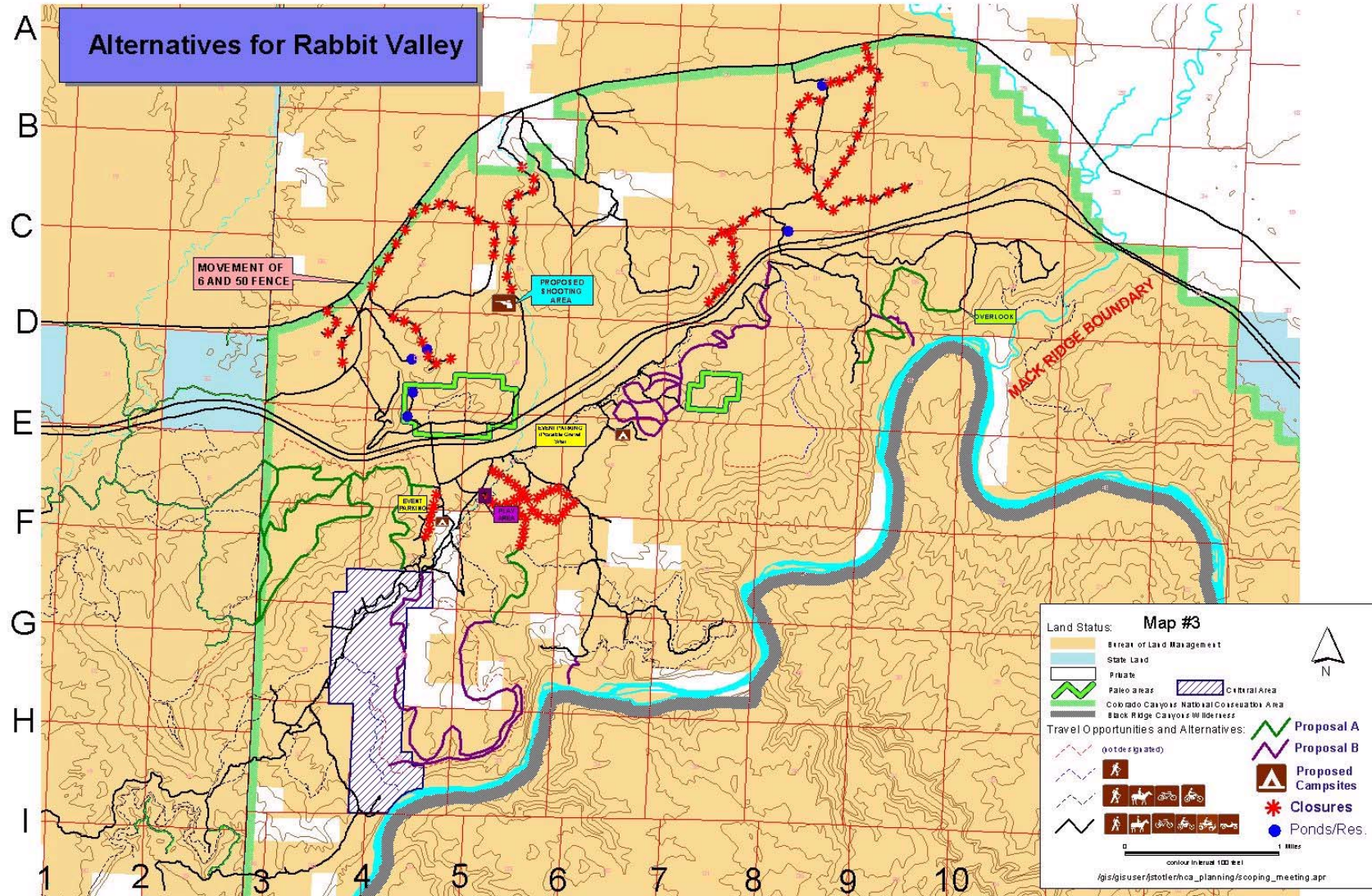
There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

River Corridor Working Group Recommendations

- 1) Require firepans or propane heaters all year round for overnight groups, and during the period from November 1 through April 30 for day users as well. This requirement applies to people accessing the river corridor from land as well as from the river.
- 2) Require portable human solid waste disposal systems (groovers) for all users (overnight and day-use) all year round. This requirement applies to people accessing the river corridor from land as well as from the river.
- 3) Not implement a permit system for river use at this time.
- 4) Continue the voluntary campsite reservation system that is currently in use.
- 5) Leave campsites un-signed and unimproved.
- 6) Restrict access in the area of Rustler's Loop so that vehicles not be able to approach any closer to the river than one-quarter mile.
- 7) Not encourage any new mechanized access to the river corridor.
- 8) Ban target shooting from the river corridor.
- 9) Limit groups hiking in from the river to view the arches to 25 persons or less.
- 10) Educate through trailhead kiosks and brochures rather than signs along the river. Produce an educational brochure for users based on the text provided by Tom Kleinschnitz that is specific to the river corridor in the NCA. Make the brochure available at Fruita State Park and the Loma boat launch.
- 11) Partner with State Parks for enforcement of existing laws and regulations within the river corridor.
- 12) Partner with WATER (and/or other appropriate organizations) to promote stewardship in general and conduct an annual river corridor cleanup.
- 13) Convene the river corridor working group each year in the fall, perhaps in conjunction with the proposed annual cleanup, to assess the current quality of the river corridor experience.
- 14) Practice aggressive tamarisk control at selected sites, and continue efforts to control purple loosestrife, Russian knapweed and other noxious weeds.

Rabbit Valley Alternatives



RABBIT VALLEY ZONE

GOALS: Maintain the Rabbit Valley area to allow for a wide range of multiple use activities in a manner that will promote land health, conserve natural resources, and provide enjoyment to current and future recreational users.

Maintain cultural and paleontological resources for scientific and educational research.

Benefits	Experience	Activities
Greater Sense of Overall Wellness -Improved physical fitness -Better Health Maintenance - Increased Quality of Life -Restored mind from unwanted stress	*Escaping Everyday Responsibilities *Releasing or reducing some built-up tensions *Enhanced sense of freedom in being able to get to this special place *Feeling good about being independent and isolated *Enjoying frequent exercise	Manage for visitors to have the opportunity to engage in multiple-use activities including Off-Highway Vehicle use, camping, mountain biking, running, hiking, horseback riding, sightseeing.
Greater Cultivation of outdoor oriented lifestyle - Greater environmental awareness and sensitivity	*Savoring Area Canyon-Country Aesthetics *Enjoying easy access to diverse recreation environments *Enjoying exploration	

Physical Setting

Retain existing landscape to the greatest extent possible using modifications to the motorized and non-motorized trail systems that will benefit all users and minimize impact to natural resources.

Implementation Actions

1. As a general goal, relocate all trails out of valley bottoms, riparian zones and private land.
2. Close or relocate all trails to avoid known paleo or cultural sites.

3. Create looped trail systems
4. Continue efforts to acquire all private in-holdings in Rabbit Valley from willing sellers
5. Identify and harden areas for special event parking able to accommodate numerous trailers (horse or OHV)
 - a. one near current event site
 - b. one near Joufflas private property
6. Relocate the 6&50 fence north of I-70 from current position on the far side of stock driveway right of way, closer to old highway 6 to eliminate dumping problems
7. Close some roads north of I-70 to all traffic
8. Join existing trails with those in the Utah Rims Management area managed by Moab BLM
9. Develop a single-track trail system on Harley dome
10. Coordinate with the Moab (UT) Field Office for cooperative (or sole) management of the Utah Rims area in Utah.
11. Relocate trail #2 off the valley floor onto the escarpment west of the main entrance
12. Connect trail #4 to Trail #3 along the upper escarpment
13. Relocate trail #3 to the opposite side of the drainage to connect with #4
14. Connect the dead end trails that protrude south from the frontage road east of the main entrance with a system of single track and ATV trails. These trails will be situated in the rocky soils as delineated by the presence of Pinyon Junipers.
15. Close trail #4 and #5 in the valley floor and reroute the traffic in the dry wash that runs east west in the same area.
16. Open a single-track that begins west of the Trail Through Time at a stock pond. The trail continues north and west across the rim and drops into a wash. The trail continues in the wash westward to the Utah state line.
17. Extend Rabbit Ear trail to create a looped hiking trail with overlooks the Colorado River

18. Create a river access point by improving the existing stock driveway near the southern end of trail #8. This opportunity would allow motorized access to a point at the foot of the cliffs with a parking area and foot trail to the riverbank.
19. Develop a target shooting area north of I-70
20. Develop a looped, single track trail east of and parallel to Rabbit Ear trail, crossing road to Gibson property.
21. Close and rehab undesignated trail north of I-70 near Utah border
22. Designate trail south of I-70 near Utah border (currently not designated) for hiking and horseback riding
23. Develop a campground against the bluff if the Joufflas property is acquired
24. Fence (post and cable) children's motorcycle play area to keep from natural expansion beyond current boundary

Social Setting

Manage the area to provide a wide variety of users with quality recreation experiences. Provide education on etiquette and expectations to minimize conflict between user groups that will share the Rabbit Valley trails in increasing numbers in the future.

Implementation Actions

1. Expand current parking area near restrooms (south of I-70 off Rabbit Valley Exit 2) to accommodate separate off-loading areas for horses and OHV users
2. Improve the children's motorcycle play area and construct ramada
3. Work with Moab (UT) Field Office to keep contiguous trails east of the Westwater Road to the Utah border signed consistently and managed seamlessly with the Rabbit Valley zone.

Administrative Setting

Manage the Rabbit Valley area for visitors to retain opportunities for multiple-use enjoyment while maintaining its ecological health to the maximum extent possible.

Implementation Actions

1. Make Rabbit Valley the priority area for the sign management plan
2. Identify partners and develop friends organizations to assist the BLM in outreach and education.
3. The BLM and grazing permittees will work together to manage grazing for sustainability and conservation in accordance with the standards and guidelines for rangeland health. Strive to continue re-vegetation efforts to benefit all users.

INDIRECT BENEFITS

Family – The benefits of achieving a sense of increased quality of life, reducing stress and improving physical fitness extend beyond to those in close contact with the user – the family and ripples outward to those in contact with each family member resulting in positive impact to the community as a whole.

Community – In addition to positive psychological benefits, the community also benefits from its association with the area. As people cultivate a an aesthetic appreciation for the area and an outdoor lifestyle, the gateway communities to the recreation areas earn recognition and become a desired destination for local and non-locals alike.

Economy – Many recreational activities such as OHV use, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife watching, camping, heavily rely on the use of public lands. As population centers grow, many people are being squeezed out of areas where these activities are accessible or allowed. The existence of the CCNCA as a place where multiple-use is still achievable draws visitors in increasing numbers. These people invest in the many activities locally by purchasing equipment, supplies, food and lodging all of which result in increasingly positive impact to the local economy. Maintaining the area to ensure visitors continue to have positive experiences will maintain that positive economic impact.